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**RED POPPIES IN
THE WHEAT**

JOHN RICHARD MORELAND



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RED POPPIES IN THE WHEAT

Red Poppies in the Wheat

BY

JOHN RICHARD MORELAND

NEW YORK

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1921

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TO MY MOTHER

NOTE

Following is a list of poems included in this collection which have been published in Magazines:

“Red Poppies in the Wheat,” “Tears,” “Gifts,” “The Kiss,” “What Would You Give?” and “Bereavement” in *The Minaret*; “Recompense,” in *The Reviewer*; “The Living Lie,” in *The Madrigal*; “Love at Eventide,” in *McCall's*; “The Sea,” in *Shadowland*; “The Intruder,” in *The Cavalier*; “Lowlands,” in *The American Poétry Magazine*; “The Hope Eternal,” “Bon Voyage,” in *The Quiver* (London, England); “Love's Sacrament,” in *Columbia Record*; “To a Japanese Print,” in *Motion Picture Classic*; “Eventide,” in *Man: the Wonderful*; “I Love You So,” in *Choice Bits*; “A Grave,” “Admiration,” “Growth,” “Genre,” “Life's Day,” “Love's Telling,” “The Faithful Messenger,” “Autumn,” “Loss” and “How Vast is Heaven?” in *The Lyric*; “Faith,” in *The Christian Herald*.

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RED POPPIES IN THE WHEAT

RED POPPIES IN THE WHEAT

Life is red poppies in the wheat,
 Love be not late!
Keen is time's sickle; years are fleet;
Life is red poppies in the wheat,
 Filled with brave dreams and crimson sweet
 But bound by fate!
Life is red poppies in the wheat,
 Love be not late!

THE COWARD DAWN

I hate the dawn; I hate the cold gray dawn;
It creeps so hungrily from the vast unknown,
Visible silence like a ghastly moan,
Waking the trembling wood and pallid lawn,
Prowling, it seeks fair food to feed upon,
Till the royal sun above the orient zone
Leaps to arouse and kiss and claim his own:
Then on a sudden, coward-like is gone!

For one I love, with hair of dull red gold,
With sad, sweet eyes, and pale and lovely face,
Like a Madonna, gentle, with a trace
Of suffering . . . though her heart was high and bold,
Dawn wrapped within his chill gray mantle's fold
And kissed and killed her in his cold embrace.

LOVE'S SACRAMENT

I knew a priest in other lands
Who daily culled an opening bud,
And crushed the stem within his hands
Until his palms were stained with blood.

I questioned once this mystery,
And why his palms were daily red?
"Love wore a crown of thorns for me;
Thus I remember, son!" he said.

Today my heart can understand
That loving act of long ago;
The rose, the thorn, the bleeding hand
Have all been mine, that I might know!

GENRE

An old fashioned shop
With dingy entrance
And tinkling bell;
A sad, sweet-faced woman
Dressed in black, behind the counter
Waiting on a little lad
With a large copper cent
Wanting a ginger cake.

The shop is lost among skyscrapers
The woman a drift of dust
And forgotten;
The lad an old man,
Yet memory clings
With joy to the picture
And the taste of the cake
Seems as if just eaten.

“I DID NOT HEED THAT SPRING WAS HERE.”

I did not heed that spring was here;
The city streets were chill and gray,
When lo, I passed a window where
White dogwood blooms were on display.

I paused . . . I could not quickly pass
The vision in the window small . . .
I felt warm winds that stirred the grass,
I heard the singing sand-dunes call!

THE KISS

*For love or lust, for good or ill,
Behold the kiss is potent still!*

O mother-lips that fashion it . . .
Earth's purest kiss and exquisite.

While dearest dreams the heart may know
Love's kiss doth hold when moons hang low.

Yet oft upon the mouth of trust
The traitor's fetid lips are thrust.

And hardened harlots hating truth
Smile and befoul the lips of youth.

How Hell rejoiced 'mid flame and drouth,
When Rome kissed Egypt's wine-dark mouth.

But ah, that kiss divinely sweet
That Mary pressed on Jesus' feet.

Time grants no surer boon than this:
Death's poppy-scented mouth to kiss.

And treasured more than gems or gold
That last, long kiss on lips clay-cold.

*For love or lust, for good or ill,
Behold the kiss is potent still!*

THE LITTLE SIN

It was such a little, little sin,
And such a great big day,
That I thought the hours would swallow it,
Or the wind blow it away.

But the moments passed so swiftly,
And the wind died out somehow,
And the sin that was once a weakling
Is a hungry giant now.

TREASURE

These are the treasures that his heart holds dear:
A christening cup marked, "To my little son,"
A bit of purple quartz from Blomedon,
A china rabbit with a broken ear,
A small, dull knife, that cost him many a tear!
All day he holds them in his close embrace,
By night his pillow is their resting place
And with the morn he laughs to find them near.

O childishness to cherish trifles so? . . .
And yet, O lad of mine, could you but know
I too have treasures that I daily touch,
Frail tokens but to me they mean so much:
A few sea shells, a boat, a pail once red . . .
These were his brother's toys . . . and he is dead!

TO A JAPANESE PRINT

Above a calm and argent sea
That shivers with the chill of dawn,
Two gulls with love for company
Speed on and on.

Small silhouettes against the light—
Two tiny boats with full-set sails—
That fear no anguish of the night,
No salt sea gales.

Two little huts, a humble sight,
Rude vine-clad homes of honest moil,
Where love abides by day and night,
Through play and toil.

Low seraggy trees of scented pine,
And towering high a mountain rears
Its snow-crowned head; the pilgrim's shrine
Of love and tears!

O swift sea gulls! O fragile boats!
O humble homes! O fragrant trees!
Why do you hold my heart like notes
That grieve and please?

I LOVE YOU SO

I love you so . . .

That of your many gifts but few I erave,
What none may value, that give me to save,
When others are your guests, I'll be your slave;

I love you so

That as the changing days shall swell to years,
I ask not for your dreams but for your fears;
Not for your kiss, your love . . . but for your tears!

When joy burns low

And grief shall kiss your lips so drawn and white,
And age comes on and twilight turns to night,
My plea is this: that I may have the right
To turn love's darkness into love's delight . . .
I love you so!

THE MIRACLE

Of human love God took a bit
And fashioned it
A little life and exquisite.

You are dawn,
You are joy,
You are hope
Little boy.

(Your eyes—
Dark pools of sweet surprise;
Your mouth—
Red berries from the south!)

You are spring,
You are fears,
You are song,
You are tears.

(Your nose—
A tiny, pale pink rose;
Your hair—
Soft silk and darkly fair.)

You are pain,
You are joy,
You are love . . .
Little boy.

O fragrant flame that God hath lit
Within my heart to quicken it,
You make life sweet and exquisite!

TEARS

At twilight when I put his toys away
My little lad's lip quivers and a tear
Gems each blue eye; his heart is rent with fear
Lest when the amber glory of the day
Illume his snow-white bed and call, "Come play,"
He may not find those things his heart holds dear:
An old tin top; a train with broken gear,
A headless horse that once was dashing gay.

You smile at childish tears? Lo! age hath toys
To which it fondly clings till death's chill hand
Puts them aside, and all remembered joys
Are wells of grief too deep to understand;
Yet as with morn my lad finds fears were vain,
So death shall give to age its toys again.

THE LITTLE ROOM

O little room, in your simplicity,
The dearest spot in all the world to me,
A shrine of joy and keenest ecstasy.

 A whitewashed wall,
 Two windows small,
 A little bed . . . and that is all!
And yet within your quiet dark
My heart has thrilled like some glad lark
 At morn dew-kissed,
 For I have tryst
With love in golden lands of Arcady.

THE SEA

By day the sea
Is a blue flower
With curling white petals,
And the great ships,
Speeding before the wind,
White moths.

By night the sea
Is a lover's garden
Fragrant with silver memories
And the twinkling lights
From passing ships,
Gold fireflies.

GIFTS

O time when your swift hours of toil are spun,
My homing heart turns to its dwelling-place,
And as the gate clicks, in the window's space
Is framed my glad and golden hearted one
Who peers into the night so chill and dun.
I turn the key and swift with childish grace,
He runs to me lifting a joy-lit face
And cries, "What have you brought your little son?"

O sweet expectancy, O dear surprise!
Within the House of Years I watch and wait:
Night's golden gondola skims western skies,
And soon a hand will fumble at Life's gate,
And I, impatient, call with eager breath,
"Come in," and then . . . "What have you brought me,
Death?"

THE LITTLE HOUSE

House of one room that doth no joy possess,
Musty and dark and damp and windowless,
And yet the anteroom to loveliness . . .

Truth is a guest within its sombre gloom,
And in the confines of this silent room
Is the great secret of decay and bloom;
How sod and sun and rain and dew and snows
Commingle in the alchemy that goes
Into the rapturous raiment of the rose.

House of one room that doth no joy possess,
Musty and damp and dark and windowless,
And yet the anteroom of loveliness . . .
Where the soul's glory shall outshine the rose.

THE UNRETURNING

Her yellow bird still wakes me with its singing;
Her books, dust covered, miss her daily touch;
Morn after morn the sun, his gold fire flinging,
Makes bright each treasured thing she loved so much.
But where is she? Upon a dawn-kissed hill
Within the sombre silence of the loam,
She who loved birds and books and flowers and home.
Does she remember still?

Her room reveals the deftness of her finger
In curtained casement and in pictured wall,
While in a nook where she so loved to linger,
Are half made garments . . . delicate and small.

I wear mirth's mask to hide my heart's keen sadness,
Lest I should weary men with grief too deep
For one who was the fount of all my gladness,
For one so sweet and young, who fell asleep.
O dark-eyed sleeper on the windblown hill,
Waiting within the silence of the loam,
You who loved life and laughter, song and home . . .
How can you lie so still?

WHITE HORSES OF THE SEA

A mauve-green sky
Dotted with white gulls
Flying before a wind arrow-keen;
An emerald race course
With hurdles three feet high
Over which racing towards the beach
In magnificent splendor
Come the white horses of the sea!

A VILLANEL

O Columbine, the lilaes blow,
The nomad spring is come again . . .
Where is Pierrot? Where is Pierrot?

The wild plum blossoms fall like snow,
And trembling in April rain,
O Columbine, the lilaes blow.

A voice is still she used to know,
Her heart is wrung with doubt and pain . . .
Where is Pierrot? Where is Pierrot?

The moon lights up with amber glow
A rustic bench where all in vain,
O Columbine, the lilaes blow.

And she who loved and trusted so
Echoes each night the sad refrain,
Where is Pierrot? Where is Pierrot?

Dust are her dreams of long ago,
Of love and spring and Castled Spain;
O Columbine, the lilaes blow . . .
Where is Pierrot? Where is Pierrot?

THE WIND

I heard the wind rise in the night
And call my name in mocking tone,
It shook the house with savage might,
And chilled me to the bone.

It screamed above the roofs of tin.
And laughed down lane and alley-way;
It cried old sadness long locked in
My heart from the white eye of day.

It tapped my window pane and said
In hissing voice, "I know . . . I know . . .
The secrets that you thought long dead,
Those poignant things of fire and snow!"

Thank God! the gossips slumbered on
Nor heard that taunting voice so shrill
That told my sorrow to the dawn . . .
The sorrow I had kept so still!

DAY

Morning is a blue-eyed child
Restless and full of play;
Seeking lovely things
To delight the eye,
To thrill the fingers,
To please the taste,
And dancing, dancing
In the warm sunlight.

Noon is a golden maiden
Wide-eyed, expectant,
And dazzling in beauty;
Searching for fairy dreams . . .
Longing for love, happiness,
And amber kisses.

Evening is a gray-clad woman
Bent and sad . . .
The ashes of a fire
That burned too fiercely . . .
The exquisite silence
After song . . .
The drooping petals of a flower
Blown away at moontime.

KINSHIP

I never see a new or broken toy
In sunlit window or in corner dim,
But in the home of love's forgotten joy
I picture him.

I never pass a smiling lad and small
In dingy doorway or in market-place,
But in the dusk of memory's silent hall,
I see his face.

I never smell a rose or clover bloom,
Or violet . . . these made his heart rejoice . . .
But down love's corridor of scented gloom
I hear his voice.

O lad of mine . . . a blossom in the sun.
Too frail to stand life's winds so fierce and free . . .
Through you my love seeks out each little one
And every father is akin to me!

WEALTH

O heart be thankful!
For no mighty king
Has half the wealth that you possess,
His gold grows burdensome
And dark with years;
His silver tarnishes,
While yours is ever new;
His gems grow dull with dust,
And often thieves
Despoil his treasure house.

O heart look up!
The turquoise of the sky
And all its clouds of pearl
Are yours and free.
Lift up your face
And feel the cooling drops
Of opal rain,
Open your hands and take the sun's pure gold,
Or hoard the shining silver of the moon . . .
They have no price.

See yonder violet—
The sapphire's light is not so sweet,
While diamonds of the dawn gem every flower,
And ruby roses flame on stems of jade
Set round with leaves of darkest emerald.

O heart be thankful
And possess your own!

LOST

Like some lad wandering in the market-place,
Who seeks in vain a friendly face,
 I saw the moon
 At noon,
So wan and white,
Lost in the brightness of the sky's blue light,
Seeking some friendly face she knew by night,
But in the rush of toil forgotten quite.

HOW VAST IS HEAVEN?

How vast is Heaven?—Lo, it will fit
In any spacee you give to it . . .
So broad—it takes in all things true;
So narrow—it can hold but you.

A WATER COLOR

The wind is scattering the pearls of rain,
Pearls great and small, pallid and twilight-toned;
The greedy fingers of the sleepy town
Are hoarding them in pools and rivulets
That gleam and glisten with a silvery light.
The arc-light, like a moon half hid by mists
Rising above dark willows on the Seine,
Edges with living light the dripping trees
And shadows them upon the cool wet street
In gray-green colors and so exquisite
That they would charm the heart of dear Corot.

THE SCALES OF LOVE

You weighed my love and thought it light,
While yours was like a strong oak tree,
But who can judge the ocean's might
From sailing on an inland sea?

Gray years have left my love the same,—
Its rugged strength I would not boast—
While yours,—but should I chide or blame,—
A castaway on some dark coast.

THE NOMAD STRAIN

Spring lured me to the woods today
 And O what beauty met my eyes;
A shallow vale before me lay
 Like some enchanted Paradise;
In lacy fern my feet sank deep,
 And all around pale violets grew,
While dragonflies were still asleep
 On tender leaves of emerald hue.

Small marigolds gleamed in the grass,
 The daisies nodded in the breeze;
A little lake that shone like glass
 Was hiding under myrtle trees;
While in a dogwood, white and sweet,
 A mocking bird, in motley dress,
Sang to his mate in her retreat,
 His song of love and tenderness.

I watched pale lily buds unfold,
 I gathered many a flower and leaf;
I saw a squirrel stir the mould
 To hide his dinner . . . eunning thief,
O'erhead the warm, gold sunlight shone,
 Noon touched the woods with soft caress,
And I alone, seemed not alone
 With so much life and loveliness!

EVENTIDE

Deep in the woods one day in spring
I passed a hut that seemed so poor,
With just a little garden round,
And lilacs blooming by the door.

Upon the step a woman sat,
A little babe upon her knee,
Around her feet there played a child
Whose age, I think, was nearly three.

And as I looked, adown the path,
In homespun clad there came a man,
And as he neared the open door
The little child to meet him ran.

The man bent down and took the child
(Whose prattle sounded, O so sweet),
And bore it to the hut and put
It down beside the woman's feet.

And bending low he kissed her brow,
Lifted the babe from her embrace,—
He kissed its tiny dimpled cheek,
And joy shone in the woman's face.

And as I looked there came to me
A peace that made the hut seem fair;
Because I knew 'twas Arcady;
Because I knew that love lived there!

RECOMPENSE

All that we say returns,
The bitter word or sweet;
Days, weeks or years may intervene,
But soon or late
The spoken word and speaker meet.

All that we do returns,
The deed that's true or base
We may forget, but all unseen
And parallel
The doer and the deed keep pace.

ADMIRATION

A crystal pool beneath a sky
As blue as Italian waters,
A young, green oak
Bending so low
That its leaves
Kiss the cool mirror
In which are reflected
The strength and beauty
Of the strong tree . . .
A forest Narcissus
In love with his own image.

TO ONE AWAY

Her feet that daily trod rough paths and steep
Are treading now green ways and kind as sleep;
Her hands that never shirked an humble task,
Are filled with all the joyous toil they ask.

Her eyes that saw the fair in everything
Now see the glorious miracle of spring.
Her gentle voice that charmed the heart of me
Is now a lyric fount of melody.

Her glad, glad heart . . . once bound by time and tide . . .
Has burst its bounds, is free and satisfied.
And her pure soul . . . a chalice white with truth
O'erflows with wonderment and joy and youth . . .
For this I know! God is a Kingly Host
Giving His guest those things she loved the most!

LILACTIME

'Tis time the lilacs were in bloom
But spring is late!
O house of life, and chill with gloom,
'Tis time the lilacs were in bloom
To lure love with their old perfume
Close to my gate.
'Tis time the lilacs were in bloom
But spring is late!

“IF YOU WOULD BE MY FRIEND”

If you would be my friend as I am yours,
I beg you give no costly gifts to me
Of gold or gems or jade or ivory . . .
For love that needs such gifts never endures.
What would I have? In yellow sun or rain
To hear your voice in all its tenderness;
And in my hours of gloom or deep distress
Your strong hand-clasp to help me bear the pain.
And when you talk I want no smooth veneer
To hide the honest things you have to say;
Tell me the truth and should it cost a tear,
I can be sad awhile. Some other day
You'll free my heart of all its ache and sting
And in my snowbound soul will come the spring!

LOVELIGHT

Some flowers there are that love the sun
And open only to his kiss;
While others sleep till day is done,
They think the moon more lovely is,
Your smile is sunshine warm and bright,
Your frown is moonlight chill and white,
But could I bask in either one,
My heart's red petals folded tight
Would burst with such a dear delight
'Twould shame the flowers of moon or sun.

AUTUMN

Autumn, autumn, you thought not I was spying
When you laid your hand caressingly on summer's
 sleeping head,
But I saw her start and shiver,
And I saw her wake and quiver,
For your touch was chill as snowtime
Though your mouth was flaming red.

Autumn, autumn, you did not think I saw you
When you crept among the grasses and swayed them
 with your breath,
When the wildflowers bent to greet you,
And the trees reached out to meet you,
For they thought your touch was beauty,
But they found your kiss was death!

Autumn, autumn, I hate you and love you,
For with all your flame and passion you are nothing
 but a thief,
Though you thrill like spring's soft magic,
You're a lover old and tragic,
And your gorgeous gold and crimson
But a cover for love's grief.

LIFE'S DAY

Darkness,
Then dawn
And dew.

Morning,
Glad skies
Of blue

Noonday,
A flower
Joy-bright.

Sunset . . .
Dead leaves
And night.

THE INTRUDER

You may clothe your form in a monk's soft gown,
You may hide yourself in a lonely cell;
You may let sweet serviee your memory drown
And try to forget where love's people dwell.

You may penance your body with thorn and knout,
You may bar your doors with bolts strong and new.
But there's one intruder you can't keep out!
Love comes when he wills and smiles with you.

THE RED WOMAN

O woman with the coral lips, O woman with the eyes
of jade,

Come not between my soul and God!

You are like lightning beautiful and round my heart
your flame has played,

O woman with the coral lips, O woman with the eyes
of jade,

You are the candle, I the moth and of your power I
am afraid

When moonlight silvers sea and sod.

O woman with the coral lips, O woman with the eyes
of jade,

Come not between my soul and God!

“AS ONE GROWN TIRED OF LIVING”

As one grown tired of living,
(A coward in the strife,)
Waits not Imperial Summons,
But dares to take his life;
So in the sky's dark distance
Sometime through fiery pride,
A star comes falling . . . falling . . .
A Heavenly suicide!

KNOWLEDGE

Lies
Are black vultures,
Carrion fed,
That foul
The air.

Truths,
Milk-white doves
Serene and sweet
And oh,
So fair.

THE POET

I am a poet.
By day I sing of trees in flower,
Emerald gardens red and amber tinted
And dreamy runnels
Beneath blue skies, or skies
Snow clouded.

My home is a tenement,
My garden the asphalt street,
My skies factory smoked,
My runnels dark water
In the city's gutters.

I am a poet.
By night I sing of the yellow stars,
The cold white wonder of the moon,
The bliss of love
And of lovers.

Tall buildings shut me from the skies,
In my window the stars never twinkle,
Nor the moon shows her silver face,
And love is a stranger
Who has never thought me worthy
Of noticee.

I am a poet!

WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE?

If you should meet upon the street
 Love like a beggar, asking alms,
And he should stand with pleading hand
 What would you put within his palms?

The widow's mite? The samite white?
 The yellow rose from other lands?
Or hurry by with downeast eye?
 Or stoop and kiss love's open hands?

KINGS

“They perish all but He remains.”

Omar Khayyam.

Who hath not marvelled at the might of Kings
When voyaging down the river of dead years?
What deeds of death to still an hour of fears,
What waste of wealth to gild a moth's frail wings?
A Caesar to the wind his banner flings,
An Alexander with his bloody spears,
A Herod heedless of his people's tears!
And Rome is flames while Nero laughs and sings:

Ye gilded actors of a drama old
Your names are by-words in Love's temple now,
Your pomp and glory but a winding sheet;
Then Christ came scorning regal robes and gold,
To wear warm blood-drops on a willing brow,
And lo! in love, we stoop and kiss His feet.

THE LENGTH OF A NIGHT

With anguished heart one crouched beside
A form, sheet-covered, cold and numb;
Night seemed a never ebbing tide,
The white, white day so slow to come.

In love's embrace one found but this:
That night was done before he slept,
He cursed . . . and cursing lost a kiss . . .
The dawn that through the window crept.

ZION STILL IS WELL BELOVED

I dreamed an angel came with shining face,
Waked me, and whispered, "This great truth record:
Once more will I show mercy, saith the Lord,
Unto My people, My beloved race:
Say to the people of all tongues and caste,
The day prophetic dawns! The gentile's reign is past.

"Long have my people felt My anger burn,
Long have their backs been bowed 'neath lash and load:
Long have they trod a weary, painful road,
But now to them I will My love return
And bring them with rejoicing home at last!"
The fig-tree buds! The gentile's reign is past!

"Their bones have called Me from the ice and sleet;
Their tears have flowed to Me a mighty flood;
Their pains have pierc'd Me when their backs ran blood,
Their prayers have reached Me from the iron's white
heat;
No more will they be alien and outcast,
The day prophetic dawns! The gentile's reign is past!

"Once more will I the gentile's conquest stem
And Israel be led by My strong hand
Back to that long forsaken, promised land,
Where they will build a New Jerusalem!
The crescent in the east has waned at last!
The fig-tree buds! The gentile's reign is past!"

LOWLANDS

I never loved high hills whose rough peaks reach
Up through the clouds and strive to touch the sky;
Give me low sand dunes where the seabirds cry—
The lyric sound of surf upon the beach.

And when soft twilight spills its shadows gray,
Hills cannot bring such soothing peace to me
As ships returning home from over sea,—
And little boats safe anchored in the bay.

NIGHTFALL

The western sky is like a disk of beaten copper clouded
with dark smoke of steamers going northward.

The surface of the Chesapeake is broken by ripples
like silver fish pursued by an enemy.

Chill is the breeze from the east, sharp with the tang
of salt and keen with the odor of pine trees.

In the tall buildings lights appear like glad faces
screened behind dark veils and latticework.

And as the brass tone of the sky dies into lead, the
yellow eyes of the harbour gleam in the darkness.

Beneath the bright lights of the curving and narrow
streets there is a confusion of cars, wagons and
people.

But in the suburbs . . . gold lamps are placed in small
windows where love with smiling face is waiting
the evening tryst.

EASTER

Morning
And a city street
Yellow with laughing sunshine;
A crêpe-clad woman
Old and feeble
Tottering beneath the weight
Of dazzling white lilies.
Life and death . . .
Dust and Immortality!

LOSS

Well I remember with what keen delight
We watched spring's magic wake the sleeping earth,
And clothe bare boughs with blossoms pink and white,
Till mating birds grew mad with lyric mirth.

'Tis April once again and potent still
The charm of spring and all it brings to me,
Yet joy is pain, for on a pine-dark hill
She bides with death in his chill hostelry.

THE RECORD OF THE AGES

The fingers of the Recording Angel
Are weary with writing;
The golden pages of the account book
Are heavy with names;
The song of the angels is so faint
That above it can be heard
The wail of the dying.
Suddenly the music stops and God's voice
Breaks the heavy silence.
"Read me, O angel of the ceaseless writing,
The number of souls slain by hate,
And the number of souls saved by love."

But the angel does not answer;
He is behind with his posting.

LOVE'S TELLING

Love is a tale so sweet, so brief,
 But Oh! the telling!
Sappho found it a tardy thief . . .
Love is a tale so sweet, so brief,
Dante dreamed it of all things chief,
 A quest impelling.
Love is a tale so sweet, so brief,
 But Oh! the telling!

THE FAITHFUL MESSENGER

How do I know the spring is come?
Still snowbound is my heart and numb.
I heard one crying in the street,
"Lilacs, white lilacs, who will buy?"
And lo! my city room grew sweet
With fragrant memories. Life's dark sky
Grew blue . . . and O, I saw again . . .
Youth . . . love and lilacs bowed with rain!

TO A CAGED LINNET

He's a saucy little fellow
In a coat of black and yellow,
And his eyes are like the seeds
Of the rape on which he feeds.
He has slender clay-hued feet,
And the seven notes are sweet
Which he puts into the song
That he warbles all day long.

Bound by bars of shining brass,
Does he miss the dewy grass?
Does he miss the rain-pools chill
And the trees that crowd the hill?
And the flowers sweet and wise,
Does he miss their soft round eyes?
And the sandy paths that go
In and out where trees bend low,
Does he miss their winding way
Where the little insects play?
And the winds that shake the trees,
Does he long to fly with these?

Little singing captive tame,
Spring and winter are the same
To you in your house of brass,
Where your days so quickly pass.
Summer brings no awful heat,
Winter flings no frozen sleet
In your even tempered zone
Where you live your life alone,
Whistling, warbling all day long
With your seven notes of song,
Singing all your life away
Just to make your jailer gay.

THE GUEST DENIED

At starlight to my dwelling-place,
A stranger came to sup with me;
His voice was sweet but passion-free,
And sad his face.

And when the evening's meal was done,
We sought the fire's genial blaze,
But all his words were chill as days
That know no sun.

He lingered till the crescent moon
Had climbed the sombre stairs of night,
And then with quivering lips and white,
He begged this boon:

That through life's sunsets touched with fire,
Or silvery mist, or twilight dim,
I would yield up my heart to him
For his desire.

But I had dreamed of love as this;—
A radiant prince, all jewel-clad,
Whose sensuous mouth would make me glad
To crave a kiss!

My will to swoon beneath his sway,
My heart to leap at his command
And wait the kneading of his hand
Like plastic clay.

But this plain stranger, chill and white,
Who seemed my dearest dreams to flout,
I hated; so I bade him out
Into the night.

O anguish of the bitter years,
O little ghosts of things too sweet,
Today I yearn to kiss love's feet
And dry his tears.

For lo, my heart with grief is numb,
Each pale regret is keen with pain;
And where is Love? I call in vain,
He will not come!

COLUMBINE

A toothless woman, bent and grim,
Whose face is seamed with line on line,
Dreams in her chimney corner dim
Of days when she was Columbine.

Her once dark hair is thin and gray,
And pale her lips that were as wine,
Her sunken cheeks are as the clay—
Old age, thy name is Columbine.

Her limbs have lost their symmetry,
Her eyes are dull like sleepy kine,
Her palsied hands rest on her knee—
Who now remembers Columbine?

How fleet the years when life is young
And man and maid find life divine!
How slow, when life's glad songs are sung:
Dream on . . . dream on, O Columbine!

Where is Pierrot—whose kiss was sweet,
Whose mouth was as the cypress-vine;
Who nightly danced with willing feet,
And arms entwining Columbine?

O youth, who look with pitying eye
On age, the lees of life's bright wine,
You, too, must feel the years drift by;
You, too, grow old like Columbine.

A toothless woman, bent and grim,
Whose face is seamed with line on line,
Dreams in her chimney corner dim
Of days when she was Columbine.

BROADWAY IN A FOG

Grotesque shadows of vehicles and people
Gliding over smooth asphalt,
Gray mists blotting out the towering buildings,
While the yellow lights
In the high windows
Are like fireflies
Caught in a net of silver.

THE TEST

How easy 'tis to love at night
Beneath a big moon round and white,
Or walking on some flowery lea,
Or sending dreamships out to sea,
Or in some garden quaint and old,
To know the joy red lips may hold,
Or near her window, like Pierrot,
Waiting the rose her hands may throw,

*But in the petty toil of day
How chill is love and far away.*

PRISONERS

My heart is like a captive bird,
A prisoner with untried wing,
Too sad to sing.

My heart is a forgotten rose,
Choked by the weeds and lost in gloom,
Too sick to bloom.

Come, love, and set the captive free
And bid him mate and soar and sing;
And kiss the drooping rose and bring
Joy's blossoming.

THE PIPES O' PAN

I strayed into the woods today,
 My heart throbbed with the joy of spring,
My voice was singing all the way
 Like happy bird on joyous wing:
Warm yellow sunshine filled the air,
 Upon my face I felt the tan,
And I forgot all toil and care . . .
 For lo! I heard the Pipes o' Pan!

I listened with my heart a thrill
 To some faint sound from place remote,
That came to me across the hill,
 From laughing lips and swelling throat;
Its melody was like the dawn . . .
 Star-gemmed and new . . . towards it I ran
Lured by its sweetness on and on . . .
 The silvery sounding Pipes o' Pan!

They say Pan's dead—(wise men who know)—
 And I have never seen his face
Though I have sought where lilies blow
 And fern and sedges interlace;
But in the woods, 'neath elm and yew,
 There dwell strange things unknown to man—
Let others doubt—this thing is true!
 That I have heard the Pipes o' Pan.

TIME

Time is a golden drink within a cup
Hallowed by God and called Eternity;
The years are thirsty mouths that crave and sup
Despair and faith and mirth and misery.

Is the drink endless? Or on some dread day
Shall fair lips parch and wither wanting wine?
God filled the cup and only He can say,
"Drink deep, O years, nor guess at my design!"

THE LIVING LIE

I dreamed last night an angel touched my face,
Bent low and questioned. "Is your life like this:
Daily to hold love in your strong embrace
And feel upon your mouth the burning kiss,
The keenest and the sweetest joy there is?"
I answered. "Nay, I have not known such bliss!"

I woke: close by my side and peacefully
Slumbered that one whose kiss is dear delight,
Whose love has crowned my life with ecstasy
And led my feet in narrow paths and white.
How could I answer if at morning bright
Death came and said, "You lied to me last night!"

INTENTIONS

So many things I meant to say
To please, to praise, to make you glad;
Such splendid chances have I had
And yet I let them slip away;
And now in shame I bow my head
For moments lost and words unsaid.

So many deeds I planned to do
To ease the road of your behest,
But while I loitered taking rest
Another hand has aided you;
And now my heart is pricked with pain
For castles reared and wrecked in vain.

So many songs I meant to sing
To spur you on to greater heights,
To cheer you on those lonely nights
When faith is weak and hope takes wing;
But while I tarried with my song
Your struggling soul grew true and strong.

Without my words you reached your goal,
Without my help you won your fight;
Without my song you chose the right
And love and beauty clothe your soul.
Today my path is rough and long . . .
I need your words, your deeds, your song!

“THE PRIEST IS COME AND THE TAPERS BURN”

The white moth is wooing his chosen mate,
The birds have a nest in the weed and fern,
But, love, you knock at my heart too late,
The priest is come and the tapers burn.

(Where were you, love, when the morning
 was heavy with mating?
And in the noontime before life's
 dear dreams had departed?
Why did you tarry when twilight
 was poignant with waiting?
Lo! now it is midnight . . . pale sleepetime . . .
 and I am chill hearted!)

The moonflower bends with the moth's frail weight,
The birds are asleep in the grass and fern,
But, love, you knock at my heart too late,
The priest is come and the tapers burn!

THE VEILED ANGEL

Death is no monster seeking prey
Of old and young and rich and poor;
He but removes life's mask of clay
And from time's prison tears the door.

His touch is neither harsh nor cold,
His soothing voice is strong with truth;
He speaks—and youth stops growing old.
And age regains its vanished youth.

NEVER REST STREET

In a little white house in Never-Rest Street,
A woman was busy from morning till night
 With washing and scrubbing,
 And cleaning and rubbing,
To sweep out the dust; to keep out the dust;
 For her all life's reaping
 Was dusting and keeping
The little white house in Never-Rest Street.

In a little gray house in Ever-Rest Street
A woman is quiet from darkness till day;
 No washing nor scrubbing,
 Nor brushing nor rubbing—
Now done with the dust? No, one with the dust,
 For chill lips have found her,
 And strong arms have bound her,
In the little gray house in Ever-Rest Street!

INCONSISTENCY

Not dead, you say?
Your friend who walking fast
Earth's farthest boundary forever past
While you yet stay
This side the portal dim,
Though needing him.
Then why your tears, and why your sad pale face?
And sombre dress of crêpe and lace?

If he be living in some lovely place
Within whose zone
Parting is all unknown,
Where age is changed to youth,
And doubt is lost in truth,
And love and joy walk hand in hand with spring,
Beneath a nightless sky forever blue,—
Why not wear garments of a happy hue?
Why not let pealing bell
The good news tell?
Why not be glad and clap your hands and sing?

FAITH

In every leaf that crowns the plain,
In every violet 'neath the hill,
In every yellow daffodil . . .
I see the risen Lord again!

In each arbutus flower I see
A faith that lived through frost and snow,
And in the birds that northward go
A guiding hand's revealed to me.

Lo! winter from some dark abyss
Came forth to kill all growing things;
'Twas vain, spring rose on emerald wings,
Moth-like, from her dead chrysalis.

Each germ within the tiny seed
Throws off the husk that to it clings,
And towards the sun it upward brings
New life to blossom to its need.

Ye hearts that mourn rise up and sing!
Death hath no power to hold its prey,
The grave is only where we lay . . .
The soul, for its Eternal Spring!

In every leaf that crowns the plain,
In every violet 'neath the hill,
In every yellow daffodil . . .
I see the risen Lord again!

HER DWELLING PLACE

Above her grave the morning sun
Piles high his bars of yellow gold;
Around her grave the squirrels run
To bury acorns in the mould;
But she who sleeps there knows she this,
Whose lips were red and sweet to kiss?
(Ere death found out our trysting place
And took her in his chill embrace!)

I know not . . . but this thing I know:
That she who loved me long ago
And now sleeps on a wind-kissed hill,
She died loving me . . . and so . . .
She loves me still.

Above her grave the faint perfume
Is wafted by the evening breeze;
Night's golden lamps the dusk illumé
And glimmer through the willow trees;
But she who sleeps there knows she this,
Whose dear, sweet face I daily miss?
(Whom death sought out in life's young day
And bore her from my love away!)

I know not . . . but this thing I know:
That she who loved in sun or snow
And now sleeps on a lonely hill,
She died loving me . . . and so . . .
She loves me still.

O little turf-bound house of rest
 On which the summer sun shines bright,
Or winter's snow, at God's behest,
 Wraps you in raiment pure and white;
O little sleeper know you this
 That grief my sole companion is?
(For though I guard your dwelling-place
 Death folds you in his chill embrace!)
 Dear laughing lass . . . this thing I know:
 God gave you to me long ago
And though death sought our love to kill,
 You died loving me . . . and so . . .
You love me still.

BEREAVEMENT

O mocking bird, put by your song,
For she who thought it sweet is fled;
And though your notes be pure and strong,
Can lyric beauty charm the dead?

O rose, put by your colors bright,
For lo! her eyes are sealed with clay;
Go robe yourself in raiment white,
Or let your petals drop away.

O sky, forget your azure hue,
Let each white cloud be black as night,
So dark no star may glimmer through,
Nor sun give warmth nor moon give light!

O time, be swift to burn away
Life's oil of tears that tells of pain,
And bring that glad eternal day
When I shall know her lips again!

A GRAVE

A grave seems only six feet deep
And three feet wide,
Viewed with the calculating eye
Of one outside.

But when fast bound in the chill loam
For that strange sleep.
Who knows how wide its realm may be?
Its depths, how deep?

SAFE IS MY TREASURE

Only one treasure have I; others hold
Great chests or caskets full of prieless things,
Rare uncut gems, and many antique rings
Of strange design; and precious heirlooms old,
Or quaint hand-carven silver, coins of gold,
Or pearls or amber beads on slender strings,
But ah, my heart to no such treasure elings,
Mine being more that these a thousandfold.

The treasure passing dear to me is this:
Her dying lips gave unto mine a kiss,
A kiss that I shall treasure and shall keep
Until I lay me down for my last sleep,
Until in lands beyond the morning skies
I give it back to her in Paradise.

THE DEAD

Today he knows a secret
And will not tell it to me.

Since childhood have we been friends,
We have swapped marbles and tops,
Sailed the same kite,
Eaten from the same apple,
Shared our early joys and told our little sorrows.

Between us never has there been a dark day
Nor a mysterious pleasure untold;
Through youth and manhood
Have we been as David and Jonathan.
We have dreamed together,
Toiled, laughed and loved . . .

Yet today he knows a secret
And will not tell it to me.

BON VOYAGE

I heard the noisy cable slip,
I felt the pressure of warm hands;
Glad voices cried, "A happy trip,"
As I set out for other lands.
Nor tears, nor sadness marred the day
That bore me from my friends away.

Some day I'll make another trip
The longest voyage ever made;
Death's hand will let the cable slip
And guide me through the sea of shade.
Weep not ye friends that round me stand,
Bid me "God speed!" and press my hand.

PREVISION

Some day they'll shut me underneath a stone—
I who am lover of the sun's gold light,
I who at blackness tremble with affright,
Arrayed in raiment of a sombre tone
Must tryst with darkness in the grave alone
And know the silence of that long, long night
Without a yellow star or moon moth-white
To bring me comfort when the weird winds moan:
When as a child they tucked me safe in bed,
Kissed me "Good-night" and snuffed the candle out,
Fear stabbed my heart, till sleep so tenderly
Calm'd every fear and I was comforted.
O sleep, that could my wildest terror rout,
Will death be kind as thou hast been to me?

THE INN OF CONTENT

There is an Inn most curious,
And daily through its ancient door
Great crowds pass in of young and old,
And good and bad and rich and poor.

Though none may number all its guests,
There is abundant space for all;—
Doorless and windowless the rooms
Each three feet wide and six feet tall.

Upon the hearth no fire burns,
The floors are damp and smell of must;
No servants there of man or maid,—
Just silence . . . long, long sleep . . . and dust!

But of the guests who tarry there
Through summer, autumn, winter, spring,
Not one has ever made complaint
To the dark Host of anything.

THE HOPE ETERNAL

What does it matter if spring be late returning,
Or grief and tears bide with us overlong?
We know full soon the patient heart and yearning
Shall find those things that wake the lips to song!

What does it matter . . . the little night of slumber
Within God's green and silent hostelry?
With morn, each guest shall wake! and who may number
The million morns that make Eternity!

BEYOND THE LAND OF SLEEP AND DEATH

Like play-worn, sleepy tots at candle-light,
Who flinch from every shadow of the night
Until they reach the peaceful Land of Nod;
So we of twilight years when night grows deep,
Shrink from kind death, who puts old age to sleep,
To wake within the Poppy Fields of God!

FINIS

Fold thou his clay-cold hands on his chest,
Light all the candles and spread the white sheet;
New-born, a soul seeks the Country of Truth,
Infinite, tearless and deathless and sweet:
Soul, death but leads thee to springtime and youth!



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